

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON

COPIES TO:

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RF:WEB

Dear Mr. Harkin:

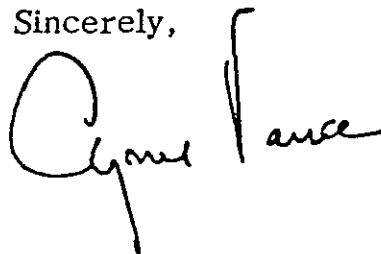
Thank you for your letter of December 7 concerning the "right of option" for political prisoners in Argentina.

As you know, the Argentine government did restore the right of option on October 26. However, there were conditions attached to its use; all prisoners who were held under the State of Siege provisions of the Constitution could apply for right of option, but their cases would be reviewed by a three man board of flag-rank officers. As a result of this review, automatic exile was severely limited. To date only some 130 prisoners have been allowed to go into exile under the right of option provisions.

As I promised at the caucus meetings, I did raise the question of the right of option with the Argentine leaders and asked that these cases be dealt with expeditiously. The Argentines replied by stressing the difficulties in speeding up the processing of the cases to the point of decision by the Board. They are well aware of our concern that more prisoners be allowed to exercise realistically the right of option.

We will continue to stress to the Argentines the importance to us of this matter.

Sincerely,



The Honorable
Tom Harkin,
House of Representatives.

12/27/77

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December 27, 1977

Handwritten notes:
This is what you asked for. There is another letter from the Argentine government.

Handwritten note:
I was asking about letter to Kennedy, MS

Handwritten initials: MS

80D177
Box 4855